

## PAGE 1

We're starting with what is essentially a flashback sequence, but we're telling the readers, at least initially, that this is simply a made-up story, something from Aaron's mom's manuscript. Jeff, decide how you want to handle this sequence, if you want to use different borders around the panels, or maybe a different palette, on this sequence. Rather than balloons, this sequence will feature narrative captions containing text from the mother's manuscript, so this will have a storybook quality to it. I'm thinking of four horizontal panels stacked here.

One more note: in the interest of getting you drawing ASAP, Jeff, I'll go back and write the captions for these first six pages while you're working. It's essentially a prose section that will be split up into captions, so please be aware to leave some room for them. And just so you know, it will be written as if it's a fantasy novel; for example, when the jeeps and motorcycles show up on page 4, the prose will refer to "gallant steeds" or some such.

**PANEL 1:** Close-up of a Chinese peasant woman's hand as it presses a few stalks of rice into the water of a rice paddy. You can actually make her a girl of 16 or so.

**1 Cap:** The village was had changed little since the time of her grandparents' grandparents.

**PANEL 2:** We pull back so we can establish our location. The peasant woman is standing up straight, as if resting her back for a moment. She's wiping sweat off her brow with the back of her hand. We see other women in the paddy, all bent over and pressing stalks into the shallows water. Toward the background, we see the village (or at least a portion of it). It's a rural Chinese village, and from the look of it, this could be 500 years ago; we see nothing modern. In fact, we *want* the readers to think this is 500 years ago, and the narration will further imply that. The woman - as well as

the rest of the peasants – wears simple clothing, and probably those wide-brimmed hats. It's daytime, and the weather is clear and bright.

**2 Cap:** Nestled in its valley, it had subsisted on the rhythm of plant and harvest, plant and harvest, for centuries.

**PANEL 3:** We move in closer to concentrate on the peasant woman, a head-and-shoulders or maybe chest-up shot of her. Her gaze is directed slightly upward, an indication she's looking into the sky. She's squinting. The hand she'd used to wipe her brow has stayed at her forehead, her hand now used to shield her eyes from the sun's glare. Her attention has obviously been garnered by something.

**3 Cap:** Nothing remarkable, nothing remotely unusual, had happened in the village for as long as even the wizened elders could remember.

**4 Cap:** So when the girl noticed a shape silhouetted against the sun, she thought little of it...

**PANEL 4:** This shot is as if we're looking with the peasant woman's eyes; we're seeing what she's seeing. She's looking up into the sun, seeing the silhouette of a flying creature against the sun. Obviously this is a dragon, but we don't want the reader to be quite sure here – it looks for all the world like a bird flying at us. The sun's glare is bright, making it hard to pick out details. Maybe Chris can do something cool with a flare or whatever to really give that sense of looking up at the sun.

**5 Cap:** ...dismissing it as merely a bird.

**6 Cap:** Given its remote location, the village was unused to visitors of any kind...

## **PAGES 2 & 3**

### **(Double-page spread)**

**PANEL 1:** By far the largest panel, taking up the majority of the space, as we reveal the dragon in all his glory. This dragon is Aaron's father. He's landing just on this side of a hill that borders the rice paddy. His wings are spread wide as he touches down, an awesome introductory shot. The peasants near the dragon are fleeing in terror as it touches down. The peasant woman from page 1, however, stands a short distance away, her back mostly to us, looking at the magnificent creature, apparently not fearful.

**1 Cap:** ...especially a great red dragon dropping out of the sky, exhausted and obviously wounded.

**2 Cap:** The girl had heard stories about such beasts, but she had never seen one, never even dreamed of the possibility.

**3 Cap:** While the other villagers fled in terror, the girl allowed her curiosity to conquer her fear.

**PANEL 2:** The remaining panels are insets, Jeff, or clasp panels. Or, if you think it works better, make page 2 a splash and move the remaining panels onto panel 3. Whatever you think best. Here we concentrate on the dragon as it goes down to all fours and extends its neck, starting to drink water out of the paddy. We can suddenly tell that the dragon is exhausted, and this brief pause is out

of necessity. In the space of a panel, we want to go from being afraid of the dragon to feeling empathy for it.

**4 Cap:** She watched as the dragon drank its fill from the paddies.

**PANEL 3:** The dragon's head is still dropped as it drinks from the paddy. The peasant woman is stepping closer to the dragon, moving very cautiously, as if not wanting to spook him. The dragon has its eyes focused on the woman even as he drinks, as if gauging her intentions. The woman is tentatively reaching a hand out toward the dragon. We want to convey she's almost transfixed by the creature's unearthly beauty.

**5 Cap:** Though she knew it could have killed her with ease, she approached the dragon...

**PANEL 4:** Move in closer. The dragon has picked up his head, no longer drinking. His gaze is fixed on the woman. A few droplets of water drip from his mouth. The woman is just a few feet from the dragon, her hand almost touching his head.

**6 Cap:** ... sensing not a creature of malign intent, but one of sublime intelligence.

**PANEL 5:** Move in even tighter. The woman and the dragon are both snapping their heads toward a sound coming from off panel. It's as if their reverie was broken by this sudden intrusion. The woman clearly looks afraid at this sound. The dragon should look - well, not afraid, but a little angry that he's been found.

**7 Cap:** Whatever might have passed between them was interrupted by the sound of approaching riders.

## **PAGE 4**

**PANEL 1:** This is probably a fairly large panel as we resoundingly break the illusion that we're in historic china. Two riders on motorcycles are riding up over the hill that the dragon settled upon, both bikes actually taking air as they launch over the hilltop. Remember, our timeframe here is mid-1960s, so keep that in mind when you're designing the bikes (and the soldiers, for that matter). A Jeep-type vehicle is cresting the hill just behind the bikes, with some soldiers in it. These soldiers are, of course, the troops that accompany a Dragon Hunter on his mission. Again, their uniforms and gear should be appropriate to the era, but a little amped, a little more cutting edge. Let's try to come up with a symbol for the magi, something that can be seen emblazoned on each of the uniforms.

**1 Caption:** The dragon turned to behold the warriors in service to the Magi as they crested the hill, carried upon the backs of their swift, seemingly tireless steeds.

**2 Caption:** His pursuers had found him. And this time, they meant for there to be no escape.

**PANEL 2:** A wider shot as we show a little bit more overall view. Maybe a slight high-angle shot, so we have a real expansive view. More troops in Jeeps are roaring in from other sides. Some Jeeps have already skidded to a stop, with the troops jumping out and taking positions. The dragon is sweeping his gaze around, realizing he's pretty much surrounded. Some of the troops have nets readied. The peasant girl is fleeing, running through the paddy. The troops are armed, of course. We want to show the dragon is surrounded, almost not knowing which way to turn.

**3 Caption:** The warriors engaged the dragon, as if they truly believed their meager weapons could harm the great beast.

**PANEL 3:** These final three panels are a cinematic set across the bottom third or quarter of the page. We're looking at the hill that borders the paddy, the same hill that the motorcycles just crested (though not necessarily the same exact spot on the hill). A figure is starting to walk up from the other side of the hill, so his head and upper body is just starting to appear above the crest of the hill. This is the Dragon Hunter, but we don't reveal his identity. He's wearing a hooded poncho-type affair that's clasped at the neck. We want to make sure we conceal his features and chest.

**4 Caption:** But the warriors merely strove to distract their mighty quarry...

**PANEL 4:** Move in closer. The Dragon Hunter is nearing the crest of the hill, walking calmly and purposefully. It's almost an Eastwood sort of moment.

**5 Caption:** ...drawing away his attention...

**PANEL 5:** The DH has reached the crest of the hill and stopped. He's undoing the clasp and the throat of his poncho, just starting to push off the garment. We still don't see much of anything to identify him.

**6 Caption:** ...while his true adversary prepared himself.

## **PAGE 5**

**PANEL 1:** Revelation panel as the DH slips off the poncho, exposing his head and chest, giving us a good look at his tattoos. We should have a total sense that this guy is a bad ass - calm, cool, confident. His expression is even, not angry.

**1 Caption:** The Dragon Hunter stripped off his cloak, exposing the myriad tattoos that snaked across his body like writhing, hungry serpents.

**2 Caption:** He stilled his mind for the coming battle. This was the purpose for which he had been transformed, for which he had endured countless agonies, for which so many others had died.

*Locate these in the upper left of the topmost panel.*

**PANEL 2:** We cut back to the dragon. The troops have moved in on the dragon, which is now in the paddy, trying to jeep the soldiers at bay. The dragon is rearing up as the soldiers try to throw nets and ropes (lassos) around it to keep it from just flying off.

**3 Caption:** Meanwhile, the warriors suffered the dragon's wrath...

**PANEL 3:** The dragon whips its tail around, smacking the soldiers who had tried to net its blind side, sending them sprawling. This is a real Ray Harryhausen sort of moment, the soldiers trying to corral to big beast and having no success whatsoever. If at all possible, let's see the DH in this panel, calmly walking closer to the dragon. The dragon is noticing him.

**4 Caption:** ...tossed helplessly like leaves before a gale. They were no more a threat to this last King than mice to a hawk.



**PANEL 4:** The dragon unleashes a blast of fire from its mouth, right at the Dragon Hunter. The DH stands his ground, seemingly unconcerned about the certain death being spewed at him. The fire has not reached him yet, of course. The DH is just starting to make a magical gesture with one hand, something very subtle at this point.

**6 Caption:** His pursuers scattered, the dragon fixed his gaze upon his tormentor. The injustices that his kind had suffered at the hands of the Magi, the centuries of pain and loss, welled up within the dragon...

**7 Caption:** ...and burst forth in a torrent of flame meant to incinerate the inferior who dared stand against him,

**8 Caption:** But the Magi had schooled their pawn well in the magical arts.

## PAGE 6

**PANEL 1:** The DH uses both hands to make a magical/almost martial arts-type gesture. Maybe you and Chris want to work out some magic/color effects to go with it. In any event, my thinking here is that I'd like whatever magic the DH guys do to have martial arts-style movements and feel to it. Here, thanks to the spell, the dragon fire is parting just in front of the DH, the fire sweeping to either side of him, leaving him completely untouched.

**1 Caption:** The Hunter made a simple gesture, and the dragonfire parted around him like a tide split by an ancient, immovable rock, leaving him untouched.

**PANEL 2:** The dragon is now plainly incensed as it surges forward toward the DH. The dragon looks as if it intends to bite the DH in half, but the DH stands his ground calmly, starting to make more gestures with his hands. The last few vestiges of dragon fire are fading away in the air.

**2 Caption:** Stunned, the dragon hesitated, allowing the Hunter the slim opening he needed.

**3 Caption:** Making yet another gesture, and loosing from his throat a sound more like the growl of a dragon itself ...

**PANEL 3:** Close-up of the DH's hands. They're making a sudden squeezing motion. Maybe some magical traces dance in the air.

**4 Caption:** ...the Hunter unleashed the sorcery that was his birthright, and that of his brethren.

**PANEL 4:** The dragon rears up and thrashes as if in great pain, his forward motion suddenly stopped. The dragon's tail thrashes in the water, kicking up a spray. The reader can almost draw the conclusion that the DH induced a heart attack or a stoppage of breathing via the spell, but the specific isn't important. We just need to understand that the DH is incapacitating the dragon.

**5 Caption:** The great beast uttered a single outcry, a sound not completely inhuman...

**PANEL 5:** We end on a shot of the dragon collapsed in the rice paddy. The dragon is sprawled out, unconscious, in the shallow water. The soldiers are cautiously moving in, maybe one set of soldiers already starting to throw a net over part of the dragon. I'd also want to get some hint of the DH in here, maybe his hand sticking down in the panel in the foreground. Or perhaps our angle is behind the DH, so we're looking past him as he gazes down at his fallen foe. The DH's mood is not celebratory or triumphant, he remains on an even keel.

**6 Caption:** ...and collapsed at the feet of his enemies...

## PAGE 7

**PANEL 1:** We finally come out of the flashback/storybook sequence. This is a slight low-angle shot, looking up at a relatively close view of Aaron's mom as she finishes reading her manuscript chapter. The sheaf of paper she holds - her manuscript - is toward the foreground of the panel, so we look up past it to see her.

**1 Mom:** "...once again destined for the cruel, bleak fate the Magi intended for him."

**2 Mom:** Well? What did you think?

*Bridge between these balloons.*

**PANEL 2:** The largest panel on the page, as we pull back and establish where we are. Our setting is Aaron's bedroom, kind of a small room to indicate the modest means by which he and his mom live. Aaron is sitting up in bed, wearing a T-shirt. His mom sits in a desk-type chair she's pulled up next to the bed. Aaron's desk (from which she pulled the chair) is a short distance away. The room is fairly typical for a 14-year-old kid, though Aaron is obviously into fantasy stuff: a Lord of the Rings poster on the wall, a poster featuring a R.A. Salvatore's Drizzt character (I'll point you toward reference), a shelf of fantasy novels, a stack of comics. His walkman/ipod headphones hang on one of the ends of his bed.

Jeff, just a reminder, they live in San Francisco, in an apartment right on the edge of Chinatown. I assume that means an older building, but you'd know better than I. Aaron's bedside lamp is on. Maybe give the lamp a dragon motif, but a child's dragon, like he's had the lamp since he was small and there's been no money to get him a new one. There should be something with a Chinese design or motif in the room as well, just something to hint at Aaron's mixed heritage.

We want to show that he and his mom have a loving relationship, so even though this is a disagreement, it's not an argument. They're still kind toward one another.

**3 Aaron:** I'm think I'm a little old for bedtime stories, mom.

**4 Mom:** You think you're too old to have your mother read to you? Besides, it's not a bedtime story and you know it, Aaron.

**5 Mom:** You're my first reader, even if I'm the one doing the reading.

**PANEL 3:** Medium shot of mom, now standing next to the chair. She still holds the manuscript in one hand, maybe even holding it up a little to show it off.

**6 Mom:** As long as my writing is what pays the bills, this is important. And your opinion matters to me.

**7 Aaron:** I know. It's just...

**PANEL 4:** Chest-up or so shot of Aaron, so we get a good look at our main character. His expression is a little glum.

**8 Aaron:** ...well, sometimes it makes me feel kind of like a baby, you still reading to me.

## **PAGE 8**

**PANEL 1:** Aaron's mom has come around to sit on the bed next to him, close enough to reach out and touch him. Remember, she still has the manuscript papers in her hand. She's looking at Aaron, kind of smiling. He returns her gaze, still looking rather glum.

**1 Mom:** I'm sorry. Maybe I do baby you a little, but...

**2 Mom:** ...hard habit to break.

**PANEL 2:** Aaron lies back in bed, the fingers of both hands laced behind his head so he appears thoughtful, pensive, as he looks up at the ceiling.

**3 Mom:** It's been just the two of since ... well, since forever.

**4 Aaron:** I know. But I'm not a kid anymore.

**PANEL 3:** Mom puts a gentle hand on his chest, a gentle, comforting gesture. He directs his gaze at his mother now, rather than upwards.

**5 Mom:** You'll just have to forgive your mother when she doesn't quite remember you're almost fourteen.

**6 Mom:** It might not seem like it to you, but yesterday you were running around here in a saggy diaper with Cheerios in your hair.

**7 Aaron:** But it wasn't yesterday.

**8 Mom:** Okay, then maybe the day before yesterday.

**PANEL 4:** Mom has now stood and is facing the bed. She's pulling the covers up to his chest, not quite tucking him in, but pretty close. Aaron frowns at the mention of school.

**9 Mom:** Come on, tomorrow's a school day.

**10 Aaron:** Thanks for reminding me.

**11 Aaron:** They call me White Rice, you know.

**PANEL 5:** Move in for a fairly tight shot. Mom leans over and kisses Aaron on the forehead.

**12 Mom:** Because your mom's white and your dad was Chinese? It's not very nice, but sticks and stones.

**13 Mom:** Just ignore them the best you can.

**14 Aaron:** Easy for you to say.

## **PAGE 9**

**PANEL 1:** Mom is standing by the doorway of Aaron's room, about to flip off the light switch. She's still within the room, looking back toward Aaron (and the reader). Next to the light switch on the wall let's see some sort of poster featuring a dragon - maybe a scene from the Hobbit with Bilbo and Smaug. In any event, we definitely want some sort of dragon image on the poster, maybe breathing fire. Mom smiles as she says goodnight.

**1 Mom:** Get some rest, Aaron.

**2 Mom:** Sweet dreams.



**PANEL 2:** Move in for a closer shot as we concentrate on mom's hand on the light switch, flipping the switch downward. This also allows us to get a much better look at the dragon on the neighboring poster, just a bit of foreshadowing. Jason, the lighting in this and the following two panels should show that the lights in the room are now off.

**3 Mom:** Love you.

**PANEL 3:** Concentrate on Aaron as he rolls over, settling himself in bed, His eyes are half-closed and he's yawning.

**4 Aaron:** Love you too, mom.

**PANEL 4:** Same basic shot of Aaron as the previous panel. Now, however, his eyes (and mouth) are closed as he starts to sleep.

**Silent panel**

**PANEL 5:** This is the largest panel on the page, Jeff. At least the bottom third of the page, and more than that if you can work it out. We're showing Aaron's dream here. I don't know how you want to show this - go with no border and let Jason bleed the color off in a watercolor fashion; maybe go with an image of Aaron sleeping at the bottom of the page, and show the "dream image" above him. Maybe leave the dream image in pencil, to give it a different quality than the rest of the page? See what you think works. The dream image itself shows Aaron's father in dragon form, maybe a

fairly tight shot of him, so there's an indication of him being chained, but not a full shot of him. We just want a hint, not confirmation that the dragon is a captive. We don't really need to see any background in the dream image.

**Silent panel**

**PAGE 10**

**PANEL 1:** We cut to the next day in the school playground. It's a bright, sunny day. In the background, so his figure is small and kind of has a lonely feel, we see Aaron sitting on a bench or bleachers. He is all alone, his headphones on, reading a paperback book. The bench/bleachers border on

the playground area, where we see some kids playing basketball. The kids playing hoops are all of Chinese ancestry (going back to the “border of Chinatown” location). Put one of them in a Yao jersey (Yao Ming of the Houston Rockets).

### **Silent panel**

**PANEL 2:** Move in for a close-up of Aaron reading quietly. Maybe it’s a Narnia book.

**1 Kid (from top):** Yo, White Rice...

**PANEL 3:** Pretty much the same shot as the previous panel. Now, however, a hand is reaching into the panel from behind Aaron and snatching the book out of his hand, startling Aaron.

**2 Kid (from top):** ...whatcha readin’?

**PANEL 4:** Pull back so we have a better view of who is present and what’s going on. A group of maybe five kids stands near Aaron. These are all Caucasian kids, all about his age; at least one is a girl. The leader, the kid who snatched the book away, is blond and kind of a bully. He’s looking at the book like a monkey trying to figure out how to work an ipod. Aaron is starting to reach toward the book. This is a bunch of kids who basically bully Aaron every day.

**3 Kid:** It don’t even have any pictures. This one of those weird books your mom writes?

**4 Aaron:** No.

**5 Aaron:** Just give me back my book, Tyler. It’s nothing you’d be interested in anyway.

**PANEL 5:** Chest-up or so shot of Aaron. One of the other kids has worked his way around to the other side and is reaching in from behind Aaron and snatching off his headphones.

**6 Hat kid:** You never heard of ear buds, White Rice?

**7 Aaron:** HEY!

**PANEL 6:** Aaron has turned to face toward the kid who snatched off his headphones, reaching to try to grab them back. The kid is holding them away from Aaron so he can't get them, a big shit-eating grin on his face. The kid points at Aaron with his free hand.

**8 Aaron:** Come on, I wasn't bothering you!

**9 Hat Kid:** You just breathing bothers us, geek.

## PAGE 11

**PANEL 1:** The kid who had the headphones has tossed them in the air so that they're going over Aaron's head and toward Matt, the bully who already has the book. Aaron is reaching up for them, but can't reach them. They're too high in the air.

**1 Aaron:** Give those back!

**2 Tyler:** Or what? Your dad will beat up my dad?

**PANEL 2:** Close-up of Matt's hand snatching the headphones out of the air, snatching them away from Aaron's outstretched hands.

**3 Tyler:** Oh, that's right, you don't have a dad.

**PANEL 3:** We pull back again, for a shot similar to panel 1 on page 10. Aaron and the group of bullies can be seen in the background. The Chinese kids have stopped playing basketball and are turning their attention toward the background, watching what's transpiring. We want the reader to briefly wonder if they might intercede on Aaron's behalf. One of the kids has the basketball in the crook on one arm. Aaron is reaching to get back his book and headphones, but he's unable to do so.

**4 Aaron:** Do we have to go through this every day, Tyler?

**5 Tyler:** I'd miss our special time together at recess. Wouldn't you, White Rice?

**PANEL 4:** Same shot as previous panel. Now the Chinese kids are going back to playing basketball, ignoring Aaron's plight. Obviously they're not going to be his saviors. The kid with the ball is tossing it to another player; one of the other

kids is shrugging, as if to say, "Who cares?" Matt is holding the book and headphones in one hand, holding them up high so Aaron can't reach them.

**6 Aaron:** Just give me back my stuff!

**7 Tyler:** Say "please."

**8 Aaron:** Please!

**PANEL 5:** Move in closer, concentrating on Matt and Aaron. Matt still won't give back the stuff. In fact, he's using his free hand to shove Aaron backwards, knocking Aaron over. We really want the readers to despise Matt. He wears a nasty expression on his face. If we see any of the other kids in the "bully gang," they're snickering.

**9 Tyler:** No.

**10 Tyler:** Why don't you make me?

**PANEL 6:** Aaron is on the ground, at least boosted up onto one elbow. His hands are balled into fists, though not brandished. We can tell he's pissed, a cold, hard expression in his face. He's reached the point where he's not going to take it anymore. Maybe we see a bit of Matt's leg or legs in the foreground. We really just want to make sure the reader doesn't think Aaron is a complete wimp.

**11 Aaron:** Maybe I will.

**12 Tyler:** Yeah, like this time is gonna be any different.

**13 Tyler:** If you're gonna do something, do it.

**PANEL 7:** Aaron is up to at least one knee here, intending to get to his feet and confront his tormentor. However, he has one hand pressed to his stomach, like he's nauseous. He looks a little sickly.

**14 Aaron (woozy, sickly outline, juggle letters):**  
**NNNGHH**

## **PAGE 12**

**PANEL 1:** Aaron has made it to his feet, but he still looks sickly. He's hunched over a little, with both hands now clutching his stomach. The bullies are laughing at him, some of them pointing. Matt seems really amused.

**1 Sharks Jersey:** Whatsa matter, White Rice? Sick to your stomach at the thought of standing up for yourself?

**2 Aaron (small, woozy):** All of a sudden ... I don't feel well ...

**3 Matt:** Yeah, if I was gonna fight me, I'd be sick to my stomach too.

**PANEL 2:** Concentrate on Aaron as he drops to his knees, the bullies standing around him. We really feel sorry for Aaron here. He's obviously in pain, but of course the bullies just make fun of him, pointing and laughing.

**4 Aaron (weak, small):** I think there's something wrong...

**5 Girl:** That's so gross. He's gonna barf.

**6 Tyler:** If he gets it on my shoes, I swear I'm kicking his ass anyway.

**PANEL 3:** Concentrate on Aaron. He looks like he's throwing up, but all that comes out of his mouth is a lazy puff or cloud of smoke. This is probably the largest panel.

**7 Aaron:** >KHFFF<

**PANEL 4:** Aaron is still on his knees, almost doubled over in pain. The other kids – the bullies – stand around him, reacting to the smoke he just belched up, acting like he’s some sort of curiosity. No one makes a move to help Aaron. A wisp of smoke still trails up from his mouth.

**8 Tyler :** What the hell was that?

**9 Other Bully:** I think he must’ve eaten the cafeteria food for lunch, dude.

**PANEL 5:** The hand of the girl who is with the bullies sticks into the panel, pointing at Aaron. We’re getting a pretty good look at Aaron here. His skin is taking on a greenish tinge here and there – he’s just starting to transform, but it should be subtle here. Aaron still looks like he’s in pain.

**10 Girl (from moff):** That’s totally weird, he’s actually starting to turn green...

**11 Aaron (woozy, juggle):** **GHNNN**



## **PAGE 13**

**PANEL 1:** Concentrate on Aaron. He's looking at his hands and arms, which are continuing to turn green, the skin starting to get a little leathery (or whatever you want dragon skin to look like). We see some of this same effect on his face as well. Again, this should be visible but subtle. Aaron is looking at himself in disbelief, almost horror.

**1 Aaron (small, woozy):** What's happening to me?

**PANEL 2:** Pull back so we include the bullies and Aaron. A couple of the bullies - the girl being one - are starting to run away, looking rather scared. Matt and a couple of the others stay, looking on at Aaron like he's a circus freak. Aaron still seems to be in pain, the green hue spreading over his skin.

**2 Tyler:** You ARE some kind of freak...

**3 Aaron (small, woozy):** Please...

**PANEL 3:** We go for maximum pity here. Aaron reaches his hands out plaintively toward Matt, just looking for anyone to help him. Aaron's eyes brim with tears.

**4 Aaron (small, woozy):** ...help me...

**PANEL 4:** Rather than helping, Matt throws the headphones and book down at Aaron. Matt seems horrified. Aaron is hunched over, looking like he's going to throw up again.

**5 Tyler:** Stay AWAY from me!

## **PAGE 14**

**PANEL 1:** The largest panel, at least half the page. Aaron is unleashing a blast of fire from his mouth, the fire spewing forward and blasting Matt. Hah, good for you, ya little prick! We want the reader to understand that Aaron isn't doing this on purpose, or even directing it at Matt. It's something that he's not in control of, at least at this point. Matt scream as the flames wash over him.

**1 Tyler:** EYAAAH!

**PANEL 2:** Matt is on fire, rolling around on the ground, trying to smother the flames. He's not completely immolated - we'd like the reader to get the sense that the little bastard will live - but his clothes are definitely on fire. The remaining bullies stand there dumbly gaping at Matt, not sure what to do. We probably see at least a bit of Aaron

in this panel, maybe down on all fours, recovering from spewing fire. He should look weak, completely drained, like the exhaustion you feel after you've heaved up your guts.

**2 Shark Jersey:** Holy crap, dude!

**3 Shark Jersey:** DUDE!

**4 Tyler:** GAAH!

**PANEL 3:** Concentrate on Aaron, his head up now, maybe even starting to get back to his feet. This is a fairly tight shot, maybe head and shoulders, so we get a good look at him. His expression is a combination of incomprehension, shock and pain. He doesn't know what the hell is going on. A few flickers of flame come from his mouth as he speaks. His features have started to change a little, though he's not yet approaching the "dragon boy" look of the character design and the issue #2 cover. We'll get to that look in issue #2. For now, he's still fairly human - though his skin is going green and leathery - with hints of what his transformation will look like.

**5 Aaron:** Oh God...

**6 Aaron:** ...oh God...

**7 Aaron:** ...oh God...

## PAGE 15

**PANEL 1:** Towards the foreground, the remaining bullies are helping put out the flames on Matt, at least one of them using his jacket to smother the flames. The readers should be able to extrapolate that Matt will be fully extinguished soon.

**1 Tyler (woozy):** HHNNNN

**2 Sharks Jersey:** TYLER!

**3 Sharks Jersey:** Hurry up, man! Put him OUT!

**PANEL 2:** Concentrate on Aaron has gotten to his feet finally, though we can see he's still in some pain. He looks terrified – afraid of what's happening to him, afraid of what he might have done to Matt. This is the moment of decision for him, when he's looking around and trying to figure out what he's supposed to do.

**3 Aaron (woozy):** I didn't...

**4 Aaron:** ...I didn't mean to hurt anyone...

**PANEL 3:** Aaron turns and starts to run, fleeing the scene. He's running away from the reader here, heading away from the playground area (and away from the school). Our angle is such that this is really a ground-level shot.

**Silent panel**

**PANEL 4:** Pull back a bit; again, this is a ground-level shot. Aaron is further away, still running. On the ground in the foreground we see the headphones, left behind, forgotten. We also see a few flames licking up in the foreground, but we can't tell what's burning.

**Silent panel**

**PANEL 5:** Pull back a little bit more, so we reveal what's burning. Aaron's book is open and lying on the ground, a slight breeze ruffling the pages. The pages are on fire. Aaron is gone.

**Silent panel**

***Troy:*** *Do you think you can get some not readable words on the pages here, so it looks a little more convincing?*

## **PAGE 16**

**PANEL 1:** We cut to Aaron's mom's office – the room in her house where she does her writing. This is a side view of her desk, so we're looking down her desk and seeing the doorway of the office. There's an open laptop computer on the desk, and we see mom's hands sticking into the panel, typing away on the keyboard. We see a few items on the

desk – a notebook, a cup with pencils and pens in it, maybe a thesaurus. Let's also see a couple of copies of her previous books; just draw the books spine on, and Lanphear can letter the titles and her name on them. There's also a pile of papers – manuscript pages – on the end of the desk closest to the doorway, the pile not even an inch high. On top of the papers is a paperweight in the shape of a dragon, maybe pewter. None of this should be too lavish or luxurious, Jeff – mom makes ends meet (most of the time), but she's not getting rich off her writing.

### **Silent panel**

**PANEL 2:** Same shot and angle as the previous panel. Now, however, Aaron is standing in the doorway, looking disheveled and scared. He's very much a little boy here. He's back to "normal" as well, no real traces of the transformation visible. He's been crying, his eyes red and tear streaks down his cheeks. He looks pitiful; you just want to reach out and hug him. Mom's hands are still visible in the panel, but they're frozen in the air now, poised over the keyboard. Even though we can see the rest of the mother, we're conveying she's stopping dead in her tracks.

**1 Aaron (small):** Mom...?

**PANEL 3:** This is probably the largest panel on the page as we pull back and get a good look at the office (which is not terribly large). Maybe the desk is even contained in her bedroom. Mom has gotten up from her chair and is rushing toward Aaron, who remains in the same spot in the doorway. In her haste, she's knocking over dragon paperweight and the manuscript pages, scattering them to the floor. Note that there's a backpack slung over the back of the desk chair she's vacating.

**2 Mom:** AARON!

**3 Mom:** What happened to you?! Are you all right?!

**PANEL 4:** Mom has fallen to her knees in front of Aaron and has wrapped her arms around him, hugging him. He's hugging her back, putting his head on her shoulder, glad and relieved at the comfort only a mother can provide. He nearly starts crying again. His words come out in a non-stop torrent.

**4 Aaron:** I think I hurt Tyler he took my book and my headphones and I felt like I was gonna be sick like I was gonna throw up

**5 Aaron:** and then I was turning green and I did throw up except it was fire and he screamed I think I burned him...

**6 Mom (upper and lower):** Shhh

**7 Mom:** It's okay, Aaron...

***Troy:** Yes, Aaron's two balloons are supposed to be a big run-on sentence, without punctuation, though I think we should leave in the spaces between words so it's readable. If you need to go with a smaller point size, that's cool, and we can extend a balloon up into the panel above.*

**PANEL 5:** Close-up of mom and Aaron. She's still hugging him, but has pulled back far enough that she can now look him in the face.

**8 Mom:** ...you're okay.

**9 Mom:** There's nothing wrong with you. This is...

**PANEL 6:** Mom hugs Aaron close again, pulling his head to her protectively. She's got her eyes closed. It's almost as if she's speaking to herself here, more than to him.

**10 Mom:** ... it's what you are.

## PAGE 17

**PANEL 1:** Mom has her hands on Aaron's shoulders or biceps, holding him out away from her so she can look into his eyes and speak to him seriously. Her tone and her expression are serious, and he seems a little unsure.

**1 Mom:** It was only a matter of time before this happened. But you're fine, honey.

**2 Aaron:** No, they're right, I'm some kind of freak. I think I really hurt him...

**PANEL 2:** Concentrate on his mother as she speaks, her expression still serious.

**3 Mom:** You said it was Tyler, right? The one who picks on you like it's his mission in life?

**4 Mom:** I'm sorry about what happened to him, and I know you are too, but there's a saying about playing with fire.

**5 Mom:** We have to worry about ourselves now.

**PANEL 3:** Concentrate on Aaron. He has a perplexed expression, maybe using a sleeve to wipe the wet tears from his cheeks.

**6 Aaron:** What...

**7 Aaron:** ...what do you mean by that? "Worry about ourselves now."

**PANEL 4:** Two-shot of mom and Aaron. She's quite serious as she begins to speak to him. Aaron looks a little nervous.



**8 Mom:** I'm going to tell you some things. Things I've been avoiding telling you.

**9 Mom:** But now you have to know.

**10 Aaron:** I don't understand what you're talking about.

**PANEL 5:** Concentrate on mom as she begins relating the story.

**11 Mom:** You will.

**12 Mom:** Aaron, your father wasn't killed in a car accident...

## **PAGES 18 & 19**

### **(Double-page spread)**

Jeff, this is the visual centerpiece of the issue, the knock-'em-dead image that will engender shock and awe in readers and absolutely force them to buy this book. So ... no pressure.

This is a big montage image, and not to polish your apple overly much, I think you better at montages than damn near anybody in this business. The montage will include images relating to the story mom is telling. I'll give them to you in a basic order, and you can arrange them how you think best, as long as you keep a general order to the stuff so it makes chronological sense. We'll run the mom's dialogue in captions across the page. Again, it's up to you if you want to approach this different stylistically - or even color-wise - from the rest of the book. If you've got ideas, let Jason know.

The images:

\*Big shot of the Dragon King, in all his glory. He's free here, not captured. We see other dragons behind him, probably in flying poses. We want to convey that there were once numerous dragons in the world. Maybe the overall background for this spread should be the Himalayas - snowy, forbidding mountains as we see on the cover.

\*Show the Dragon King in human form, holding hands with mom when she was younger. They look into each

other's eyes. This is a very much a "Romeo and Juliet" type of image. Their clothing should be a little more exotic and Eastern-influenced here, just a subtle hint that they met in Asia.

\*An image representing the secret society of Magi. Maybe show the "lead" wizard – the main baddie – most prominently, then behind him show other Magi gathered around a dragon (NOT the Dragon King), restraining the struggling beast with magic and chains. Maybe the lead wizard holds a glass container – some ornate, magical thing – filled with dragon blood.

\*Aaron as a baby child, wrapped in a blanket and held in his mother's arms. His father is there as well, an arm around mom's shoulders, gazing lovingly at his son. Their clothing is now more Western/American in appearance.

\*We show the battle as the Dragon King – now in dragon form – faces off against a Dragon Hunter and his elite troops. Keep in mind that these troops are from 14 years ago, so we're talking about gear and weapons circa 1990. Mom is running away and escaping, carrying Aaron, who is a toddler, maybe a year old. We should have a sense the Dragon King is making a stand so his family can escape.

\*Final image showing the Dragon King being engulfed by magical fire – maybe blue rather than red/orange – cast by the Dragon Hunter. He's still in dragon form, screaming as the flames engulf him. We want the impression that he perishes.

**1 Cap:** "...your father was a dragon.

**2 Cap:** "I know how that sounds. I know. But the world is a lot more... magical ... than anyone realizes. Or at least it used to be.

**3 Cap:** "A long time ago, the skies were filled with dragons. And some of them, the most special ones, were shape-shifters who could take on human form.

**4 Cap:** “That’s how I met your father, and how I fell in love with him. When he shared his secret with me, it didn’t change how I felt about him.

**5 Cap:** “Your father was among the last dragons on earth, because they’d been hunted to near extinction by a secret brotherhood of sorcerers who call themselves the Magi.

**6 Cap:** “They coveted the dragon’s magic, and used their blood and their bodies in rituals to gain more sorcerous power. So one by one, the remaining dragons were captured and put to death.

**7 Cap:** “Your father had been captured once too, before I met him, but he escaped and vowed he’d never be taken again.

**8 Cap:** He gave up what he was and stayed in human form. We built a life together, and eventually that life included you.

**9 Cap:** “But it didn’t last. We were found by a Dragon Hunter, one of the mystical warriors who have served the Magi for centuries.

**10 Cap:** “Your father made a stand while we ran.

**11 Cap:** “He sacrificed himself, so that you and I would live.

**12 Cap:** “That’s where you came from, Aaron...”

## PAGE 20

**PANEL 1:** We come back to a shot of the mom as she finishes telling the story. Her expression is still serious.

**1 Mom:** ...that's who you are.

**2 Mom:** The blood of dragons is in your veins. You're the last of your kind.

**3 Mom:** What happened today means the change is starting. You're old enough that you'll be able to shape shift from human to dragon and back again.

**PANEL 2:** Two-shot of mom and Aaron. Aaron is pulling away from her, looking at her like she's crazy.

**4 Aaron:** That's not true! None of that's true!

**5 Aaron:** It sounds like some story from one of your stupid books!

**6 Aaron:** My father's not a dragon, my father died in a car accident!

**7 Mom:** Aaron...

**8 Mom:** ...Aaron...

**PANEL 3:** Move in for a closer two-shot of the mom and Aaron. She's grasping him by the shoulders or biceps again, not letting him back away from her. Her gaze is intense, almost stern, as she looks at him, forcing him to pay attention to her.

**9 Mom:** ...listen to me.

**10 Mom:** This is true. This is real.

**11 Mom:** Maybe I should've told you sooner. But I thought you'd never believe me until ... something happened.

**PANEL 4:** Move in tighter. Mom grasps Aaron's arm with one hand and pushes up his sleeve with the other. We can see a patch on his forearm that still has a greenish tinge, with leathery skin.

**12 Mom:** Now you don't have any choice but to believe me.

**PANEL 5:** Two-shot of Mom and Aaron, not quite so tight as the previous panel. Mom has released his arm. Aaron's expression shows he's struggling to make sense of all this. Maybe he's putting his hands to his head, like he's overwhelmed. Mom is starting to gather up some of the

papers she spilled onto the floor when she got up from the desk.

**13 Aaron:** Well, what am I supposed to do? How am I even supposed to go back to school?

**14 Mom:** You're not going back to school.

## **PAGE 21**

**PANEL 1:** We see just a bit of Aaron in the panel, but we're more interested in mom as he looks on, watching her

continue to pick up the papers. We still see the dragon paperweight on the floor. If possible, let's get at least a glimpse of the backpack on the chair.

**1 Mom:** Everything has changed, Aaron. Our old lives are gone.

**2 Mom:** You can't go back to school, we can't even stay here anymore.

**3 Aaron:** You're saying we have to move?

**PANEL 2:** Concentrate on the mom as she picks up the dragon paperweight.

**4 Mom:** We have to move and we'll probably have to keep moving.

**5 Mom:** The Dragon Hunters, the same kind that captured your father, they'll be able to find you, now that you've started to change.

**PANEL 3:** Mom is slipping the dragon paperweight into the backpack, kind of symbolic of keeping "the dragon" (Aaron) safe. She glances at Aaron as she does this.

**6 Mom:** They'll come for you, and we can't be here when they do.

**7 Mom:** We only take what we can fit in the Jeep. And we have to do it right now.

**8 Mom:** I'm sorry, Aaron. I know you didn't ask for this, and I know you don't deserve it. I wish it wasn't this way, but it is.

**9 Aaron:** Mom? If they find us, what would they do to me?

**PANEL 4:** The last three panels are a cinematic set, nearly the same shot in each, all from the same angle. Each is a two-shot of Aaron and his mom. Here they look at one



another, Aaron looking a little scared as he starts to grasp the full extent of this. His mom's gaze is serious.

**10 Mom:** If they find us...

**PANEL 5:** Same basic shot and angle as previous as Aaron and his mom look at one another. She can't find the words, doesn't want to say what she's thinking.

**Silent panel**

**PANEL 6:** Same basic shot and angle as previous. Now, however, mom is hugging Aaron close to her, protectively.

**11 Mom:** Just hope they don't find us.

## **PAGE 22**

**PANEL 1:** We cut to a different place. This is a close-up of the Dragon Hunter's eyes, closed as if in meditation.

**Silent panel**

**PANEL 2:** Pull back just a bit, enough that we see a little of the Dragon Hunter's features, but not a lot. His eyes are now open. His expression is even, calm.

**Silent panel**

**PANEL 3:** The largest panel on the page, more than half the page as we reveal where we are and who is present. The setting can be some kind of cool, shadowy, faintly Asian temple, maybe some incense smoke curling up, whatever you think looks cool. The Dragon Hunter is the focal point of the panel. He can be in a lotus position, if you like, maybe on a dais. Near him are some of the "troops" currently assigned to him, which are decked out in black ops-type military paraphernalia, all very cool and cutting edge, lots of gear, headset mics, etc. At least one of the soldiers is a woman. The soldiers have their attention directed at the DH, poised and waiting for him to tell them what to do. My notion here is that this is not in the "wizard fortress" in Bhutan, but in some private retreat in California.

**1 DH:** I have him.

**2 Cap: TO BE CONTINUED!**